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Congress can't keep secrets, let alone keep the lid on the CIA

There could be few spectacles in Washington more hypocritical than Senators Goldwater and Moynihan of the Senate Intelligence Committee solemnly delivering a letter to the Senate majority and minority leaders rebuking their colleague Senator Helms for disclosing CIA information.

The disclosure of secret committee information is a violation of Senate and House rules more honored in the breach than in the observance.

Helms' dereliction in charging that the CIA supported Jose Napoleon Duarte, the winner in El Salvador's presidential election, is picayune, however, compared with the flood of leaks from the Senate and House intelligence committees aimed at crippling President Reagan's policies in Central America.

The extraordinary newspaper and TV campaign being waged against these policies would not be possible without daily leaks from these two committees.

When will Goldwater and Moynihan express their concern over these far graver excesses? When will they call on their colleague Rep. Edward Boland (D-Mass.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, to join them in clearing up the mess?

There is urgent need for reform.

Why is it necessary for the Senate Committee to have a staff of 40 members? The House committee gets by with only seven.

What is the guarantee of security when all 100 Senators have access to CIA information given to the Senate Intelligence Committee — and any of the 435 House members can ask for the same information on a

need-to-know basis?

What is the guarantee of security when such exchanges are conducted not by Senators and Representatives but by their staffs, few of whom remain long in their jobs?

The President's national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, presents a clear challenge to Congress with his forthright advocacy of the need for U.S. covert action — in Central America and other countries where the Soviet Union seeks to subvert friendly governments.

Countries are no longer conquered by armies but by thieves in the night placing bombs.

If covert action had been taken against the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Shiite radicals who bombed the U.S. Embassy in Beirut last year there would have been no attack on the U.S. Marine headquarters, no loss of lives, and America would still be playing the major role in Lebanon.

But covert action is too important to be left to the present sloppy arrangements for Congress' CIA oversight.

Only House and Senate committee members should receive CIA briefing — with the right of immediate access to the President.

There is no reason for any staff members on such limited committees — nor for the Senators and Representatives involved to brief other members of Congress for whom they should be holding a watching brief.

Intelligence gathering and covert operations defeat themselves when made known to a wide audience. **The present system is manifestly absurd. It serves only to sabotage, not to safeguard, U.S. national interests.**

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